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Subjectivation, togetherness, environment.

Potentials of participatory art for Art Education for Sustainable Development (AESD)

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Abstract: Through a process-oriented analysis of the participatory art project *The Hill* this article explores the relevance of participatory art projects for the development of AESD – Art Education for Sustainable Development. Inspired by Felix Guattari's *Three Ecologies* (2008) the analysis moves through three sub-studies delving into three different aspects of the project. Each sub-study adopts two overlapping analytical 'lenses': The lens of a contemporary art form (performance art, community art, and site-specific art) and the lens of a related theoretical concept (subjectivation, togetherness, environment). The aim is to propose art educational ideas and strategies that stimulate students to challenge the current political, economic and environmental situation. Central questions addressed by the article are: How can educators use contemporary artistic strategies to challenge essentialist and opportunistic self-understandings? What is the potential for participatory art forms to explore alternative and more sustainable conceptions of human subjectivity? How can art education work in favour of a sense of interconnectedness between the individual, the social and the environmental dimensions of being? In conclusion, the article proposes art education as a symbolic place for carrying out art-inspired experiments with how to live our lives in more sustainable ways.

Keywords: Art education, contemporary art, sustainability, subjectivation, togetherness, environment

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Introduction

Background

During my 20 years as a researcher in art education, two conflicting trends have become evident: While the social, political and pedagogical engagement of contemporary art in society has continuously increased, the focus of public education has narrowed to providing learners with predefined competencies. In Scandinavia, as in many other parts of the world, this latter trend can be seen as a consequence of neoliberal dominance in education policies, which has meant all public educational programs have been forced to increase their focus on measurable outcomes.

In the recent book *Konkurrencestaten* [The Competition State] (2011), Danish economist Ove. K. Pedersen describes in detail how the school system of the neoliberal competition state has deliberately substituted education of the *essential* person, connected to humanist ideals of equality and democracy, with education of the *opportunistic* person, ready to be measured and ranked according to shifting values of the labor market (pp. 186-203). Through individualized classification, the school of the competition state motivates every single student to consider herself responsible for developing her own competencies and personal skills. Instead of being viewed as valuable because of her unique, innate personality, the student is now considered an empty signifier waiting to be filled with meaning and desires according to the state's shifting economic interests (pp. 190-192).

In opposition to this situation, many educational researchers (Ellsworth, 2005; Robinson & Aronica, 2015) claim that teachers and educators have to resist and increase their focus on the ethical dimension of what it means to be human. In *Beyond Learning* (2006), educational philosopher Gert Biesta, following Hannah Arendt, suggests that "education should not be seen as a space of preparation, but should be conceived as a space where individuals can act, where they can bring their beginnings into the world, and hence can be a subject" (p. 137). Rather than wishing for a return to the humanist ideal of the essential person, Biesta asks how the self-sufficient ideal of the opportunistic person can be ethically opposed through the education of the subject *in action*, a relational subject of becoming that unfolds, not as an isolated, competitive individual but "in our being *with others*" (p. 138, emphasis in original).

Within the field of contemporary art, artists have increasingly tried to answer the ethical questions raised by the competition state through the creation of new types of communities in opposition to the market logic. *Relational aesthetics*, *participatory art*, and most recently, *socially engaged art* and *social practice* are all terms seeking to encapsulate how a number of art projects engage with/in political activism. In several cases, artists, often in cooperation with subcultural movements, have established parallel institutions—universities, firms, farms and whole mini-communities—that challenge the establishment by pointing to ethical ways of doing things independently of processes of time, efficiency, and yield optimization (Bishop, 2012; Thompson, 2012). The increasing number of art projects taking the form (and sometimes also the name) of schools, universities, lectures and the like have even made art theorists such as Irit Rogoff (2010) speak of an "educational turn" in the field of art, including educational turns in curating and exhibiting art projects as education.

An important discussion about this type of artistic project concerns the ethical question of how a participatory art practice is established. On one hand, the independent status of art allows experiments with radical educational initiatives that foreground collective experiences of learning, which would be difficult to realize within the school system. On the other hand, the conditions of participation in educational artistic practices easily become unclear, especially when the projects take place outside the gallery space. When we engage in a practice inside an art institution, our position as participants is

voluntary, but if an artist chooses to leave the art gallery and initiate collaboration with participants in different settings, such as institutions or public spaces, participation often becomes *non-voluntary* in the sense that even if we are informed that we are participating in an art project, we often are not fully aware of what this might or might not entail (Helguera, 2011, p. 16). However, as emphasized by Helguera (2011) and Bishop (2012), these problems are not to be solved through an ethical code of conduct for participatory art but instead through careful reflections on the relationship between the ethical and artistic aspects of every single project. In other words, if we believe in what Biesta (2014) calls "the beautiful risk of education," we have to continue to open ourselves to new possibilities for educational encounters, and currently, a number of such possibilities are enacted in and through the field of socially engaged participatory art.

Environmental sustainability

Within the field of contemporary art and the field of education, environmental sustainability is an important theme. In contemporary art, in addition to an educational turn, we might speak about an ecological turn that emphasizes the many projects that focus on issues of sustainability and the politics of ecology (Demos, 2016). In this type of project, educational activities, such as workshops, lectures and activism, aim at discussing and exploring alternative practices within an ecological perspective concerning relationships between contemporary human life and nature and how to bring these life forms into closer ecological interdependent cycles. For example, in 2012 the artist group Futurefarmers initiated a project called Flatbread Society as a public art program in Bjørvika Harbor in Oslo. The aim of the ongoing project is to activate the site through public programs, a *Bakehouse*, where participants can bake their own bread and participate in various exchanges among communities, and a cultivated grain field and in a larger perspective to "connect Norway's agricultural heritage to the present, extending the metaphor of cultivation to larger ideas of self-determination and the foregrounding of organic processes in the development of land use, social relations, and cultural forms" (Flatbread Society, n.d.). The idea that organic processes can be enacted across the realms of environment, sociality and culture, to me, is an example of how art can offer radical alternatives to the economic opportunism of current educational thinking through a focus on interconnectedness rather than competition and growth.

Within the educational system, questions of sustainability are also treated, although in a much less radical manner. Sustained by international programs of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), such as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005–2014 (UNESCO, 2008), in many European countries questions of sustainability have been adopted as part of the general curriculum. In Norway, ESD is an integrated part of the central national education strategy (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2011), and the Norwegian national core curriculum has a special section on "the environmentally aware human being" (Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1993). However, the main focus in the Norwegian documents is scientific and ethical demands, while possible aesthetic or artistic dimensions of ESD are barely mentioned at all, neither in the core curriculum nor in the subject curriculum for Arts and crafts (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006). In other words, although ESD is inscribed in international and national education strategies, in these strategies connections to artistic subjects remain scarce.

Presentation of the research

To deal with the complex situation outlined above, in 2010 I began a long-term research and development project, which I call Art Education for Sustainable Development (AESD) (Illeris, 2012a, 2012b), hosted by the University of Agder in Norway. In this project, I define *sustainable development* as the process of creating a long lasting, yet dynamic, balance between humans and their natural and man-made environment trying to find ways "to live within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (Illeris, 2012b, p. 78). The project thus is opposed to solution-finding as short-term fixes and in favor of a reconsideration and reorganization of the basic conditions of human life.

This article aims to contribute to the AESD project by investigating the pedagogical potentials of participatory art in relation to questions of sustainability. The inquiry is inspired by Felix Guattari's important text *The Three Ecologies* (2008), in which he refers to three ecological registers: human subjectivity, social relations and the environment (pp. 19-20). The aim is to investigate the possibilities for a future type of person who is neither essential nor opportunistic but is *ecological* in the sense that she or he relies on a deep sense of interconnectedness between "a nascent subjectivity; a constantly mutating socius; an environment in the process of being reinvented" (p. 45).

As the interlocutor for this study, I chose a participatory art project called *The Hill* by the Danish artist group Parfyme (2006). In 2015, I published a study in which I used the same project as my case in order to develop a strategy for teacher certification courses and university programs (Illeris, 2015)². In the present study, my goal is to explore the relevance of participatory art for the development of AESD. My path moves through three sub-studies each delving into one aspect of the project through the lens of an art form and the lens of a related theoretical concept. The three lenses that guide the three sections of the text are as follows:

- I. The performance art/subjectivation lens that considers the relationship between performance art and human subjectivity.
- II. The community art/togetherness lens that focuses on community art as connected to social relations and togetherness.
- III. The site-specific art/environment lens that connects site-specific art to our ways of entangling with space and environment.

In the conclusion of the article, I return to the concept of the ecological person and look at the possible pedagogical potentials of participatory art for AESD.

Presentation of The Hill

Our point of departure was a construction team that goes to work every day from 9 to 5, drinks coffee, talks to people and most importantly: builds. Like a living and constantly reacting sculpture. The hills were the point of departure for the concrete constructions, but we also came across other things, like soccer goals, skaters' ramp, etc. (Skovbjerg Jensen, 2006, unpag.)³

² In this article, the material presented in the introduction to *The Hill* and in section II partially overlaps with material presented in the 2015 study.

³ Translations from Danish by the author.

Bakkelandskab (English title: *The Hill*, literally, "hill landscape") was a site-specific, participatory art project, organized and enacted by the Danish artist group Parfyme⁴ in August and September 2006. The project took place in Mimersgade, a street in a working-class neighborhood of Copenhagen then known for a high concentration of immigrants and socially marginal Danes. Situated in an open area with a lawn adjacent to the street, *The Hill* was part of a larger public art project called *SID NED!* ("Take a Seat!"). According to the curator, *SID NED!* aimed at "challenging people's idea of a quarter, both those looking at it from the outside and those living here" (Skovbjerg Jensen, 2006, unpag.).⁵

Physically, *The Hill* consisted of a small temporary construction site situated on the lawn area closest to the street. At the beginning of the project period, the site included a mobile site shed that the artists had constructed themselves before the project began and a pile of building materials, mainly planks, wooden boards of different sizes and shapes, and large pieces of green felt. After the construction site was established, the project began: Every day from nine to five for a period of three weeks, the four artists went to work constructing their artificial hills out of planks and wooden boards covered by felt.

However, the most important part of *The Hill* was not in the physical materials brought to the site by the artists or in the structures they produced during the project. The project's *raison d'être* was in the experimental enactment of a social *praxis* within these pre-established framings. By being present day by day, the artists became a new point of reference for various forms of sociality. Local residents and occasional passersby were invited to participate in the construction activities and in other everyday activities, such as making small talk and drinking coffee.



Fig. 1: Beginning the process of construction. Fig 2: The Parfyme artists eating lunch inside the mobile site shed.
Photos: Parfyme.

In particular, the artists established close relationships with local school-age children who hung out in the area. Soon after the artists began their work, the children began asking the construction workers what they were doing and why. The artists answered that they were building and then asked the children what they would like to have built in the area. When the children agreed to participate by coming up with ideas for new construction and by assisting in the actual building, the project started to change. Alongside the artists' hills, new sites began to emerge: a small soccer field with goals, a small viewing

⁴ In 2006, Parfyme was based in Copenhagen. The members of the collective were Pelle Brage, Ebbe Dam Meinild, Laurids Sonne, Mathias Pharao and Fabian Nitschkowsky.

⁵ *SID NED!* was produced by publik and curated by Christian Skovbjerg Jensen.

platform and a skating ramp. Through the collaborative work, the children and the artists became involved in a social learning process that, at least for the artists, entailed new kinds of experiences:

As it turned out, yes, this was a task that involved demanding pedagogic efforts besides the job of construction. After school-time kids were everywhere, well, of course, it's their hood. Kids who, in one way seem addicted to the chaos and excitement of being in a gang (or a mass), used to problems, conflicts ("I'll call my bigger brother!"), but at the same time bringing their own genuine energy and speed (Parfyme, 2006, para. 3).

The open framing of the artwork allowed Parfyme to respond intuitively to the children's energy and speed, without any particular intentions or requests for certain outcomes. The artists' idea was to *just build* and see what happened, both socially and materially. Instead of using the artwork as a site for the artists' personal expression, *The Hill* became a site for the enactment of provisional forms of collectivity. For three weeks, it became an experimental form of community performing its own sociality around the day-to-day activity of building and playing.



Fig. 3: Dialogue with the schoolchildren. Fig 4: Constructing soccer goals. Fig. 5: Local children playing on the hills. Fig. 6: Local children on the viewing platform.
Photos: Parfyme.

I. The performance/subjectivation lens

My first approach to *The Hill* is through the lens of performance art, through which I relate the art project to the first of Guattari's registers: human subjectivity. Furthermore, I introduce the theoretical concepts of performance and performativity by feminist scholar Judith Butler and connect them to subjectivation understood as the ongoing socially inscribed process of becoming self.

Performance art

As an art form, performance replaces the modernist view of the work of art as an independent physical object with the art work viewed as an action that evolves in time. A performance, like a game, a ritual or a play, includes a special ordering of time and space, and it follows certain rules set up by the artists in advance (Schechner, 2003, p. 8). Unlike classical theatre, however, this action is not only performed in front of an audience but also involves the spectators, thus actively blurring the categories of artist and audience (Fisher-Lichte, 1997).

When performance art was first established as a genre during the 1960s and 1970s, it was closely connected to the artist's body as an active physical presence. The authenticity of the performance experience was thus guaranteed by the body's resistance to any form of representation through outer media, such as photo, film, writing or spoken language. The audience necessarily had to be present during the performance itself to live the sensory complexity of the piece. According to performance theorist Peggy Pelan (1993), performance art can be considered a protest against the superiority of the sense of vision and in general against the power of representation (Jalving, 2011, pp. 33-34).

Performance art plays a central role in contemporary art theory because it challenges the way that we are usually positioned as subjects in the art encounter, where traditionally viewers are positioned as receivers, or in certain cases as collaborators, but seldom as active partakers or protagonists. In performance art, the audience becomes part of the art work, even if often in an uncertain position, or one could argue, in a position that you will partly have to invent by yourself, thus destabilizing your position as a viewer (Jackson, 2014).

According to these broad considerations, *The Hill* is a piece of performance art, based as it is on a carefully planned mise-en-scène of place, time, materiality and human bodies, and because of its blurring of the categories of artists and audience. Moreover, a central part of the project is that through the improvised involvement of the audience, anything can happen, and the artists intends to be open to whatever direction the action might take. As stated by Parfyme: "Here we are 6 days a week for 3 weeks, building for you, whatever you say; tomorrow! What's going to happen? – We'll see soon enough" (2006, para. 3).

Subjectivation

While classical performance art plays with transcendence of everyday behavior, Parfyme chose to adopt a different strategy. By choosing an innocent and easily recognizable setting, a construction site, and easily recognizable roles for themselves as construction workers the artists invite the audience to participate in the enactment of a piece of reality that might seem familiar and close to everyday life. Yet the project is also open for participation, and the artists are thrilled that the local children's spontaneous behavior forces the artists into new pedagogical roles. While the art work performs the participants through an invitation to enact various forms of bodily behavior belonging to the act of building, the participating children also perform the artwork through the enactment of forms of behavior more familiar to the playground or the schoolyard than to a construction site.

The same ambivalence between submission (to be performed) and mastery (to perform) is present in the concept of *subjectivation*, introduced by Michel Foucault (e.g., 1994) and further developed by poststructuralist thinkers in the 1990s in order to explain how our idea of becoming a subject is generated. In the 1993 book *Bodies that Matter*, feminist scholar Judith Butler explains how the ongoing process of manifesting an identity is connected not to who we are but to what we *do*. Butler (1993)

shows how our idea of self (e.g., of being a woman or a man) is produced through our repetitive bodily enactment of certain schemes or matrixes of behavior, referred to as *performativity*. Subjectivity is not a pre-existing core that is voluntarily expressed in performance. Instead, performativity produces our idea of subjectivity through continuous processes of iterability.⁶

Without talking directly about performance as an art form, Butler (1993, p. 95) adopts a distinction between the concept of performance and the concept of performativity: *Performance* indicates a reflexive, voluntarily staged, and often transgressive kind behavior, similar, for example, to the behavior traditionally adopted by performance artists; *performativity* indicates the spontaneous, unelected but often involuntary stereotyped behavior where we unconsciously repeat socially available behavioral schemes or matrixes. When taken together, performance and performativity constitute the ambiguity between the simultaneous practices of mastery and submission, which are at the heart of subjectivation—the process of becoming a subject (Davies, 2006, p. 426)

A fundamental idea connected to performance art is that a performance is not a play but a piece of authentic reality that cannot be repeated or reproduced in any other medium. As the audience, you have to be present when the performance takes place, and through your active participation, you will experience the transformative power of the work (Phelan, 1993). In *The Hill*, however, these processes are open-ended. Instead of challenging existing matrixes, the project invites local children to just help build; and instead of repressing or encouraging transgression, the artists of Parfyme accept the children's behavior and treat them with curiosity. By acting consciously naïve, about their own performance and about their way of positioning the children, the artists want to challenge fixed roles and procedures by offering an open space where participants can just construct "whatever you want."

Ruptures from repetitive forms of behavior seem to happen, not in the conscious, voluntary performance of alternative roles (as Butler would suggest) but in the open-ended encounter between groups who behave differently. From the point of view of subjectivation, *The Hill* does not facilitate individual performances that break with patterns of bodily behavior. Instead, the project gently exposes these patterns in order to make the social situation work as well as possible within the frame. Using the words of Norwegian researcher Boel Christensen-Scheel (2009), from her analysis of two participatory art projects,⁷ in *The Hill*, "performativity is a sociality rather than a reflexivity," and this performative sociality "might therefore be characterized as an 'empty sociality', where the social component is a *together* with someone rather than a *for* or *in front of* someone" (p. 149, emphasis in original). In this way, *The Hill* promotes an open form of being where the performance of human individuality is withdrawn in order to leave space for common activities, such as building and playing together. While early performance art raised questions of the body as identity, participatory art raises questions of the body as activity deliberately moving attention from *being* somebody to *doing* something. In the same manner, understanding participatory art through the performance/subjectivation lens is to see subjectivity as de-centered, processual and subjected to praxis.

⁶ Butler adopts the specific notion of iterability from Jacques Derrida (1988, pp. 1-24), who uses it to engage with the performative force of writing and of language in general.

⁷ Boel Christensen-Scheel, in her 2009 dissertation *Mobile Homes*, coins this notion through her analyses of two art projects: *Sørfinnset School/The North Land* in Norway and *The Land in Foundation* in Thailand. These land projects are characterized by their site-specificity, their unlimited timeframe and their focus on being frames for everyday activities (Christensen-Scheel, 2009, pp. 26-31).

II. The community art/togetherness lens

The open form of togetherness where sociality is performed as a collective, non-reflexive form of praxis invites us to further explore what Guattari defines as the "socius." In this section, I delve deeper into this register first by exploring *The Hill* as a community art project and then by looking at the project through the lenses of Jean Luc Nancy's philosophy of togetherness.

Community art

The term community art or community-based art began to be used in the 1960s, during more or less the same period as performance art, but instead of the body, the focus of community art was much more literally directed toward societal and political problems. Typically, community art projects tried to establish dialogical exchanges and creative actions involving one or more artists together with local participants, and the projects were often based in an economically or otherwise deprived area (Morgan, 1988). Politically community art projects were based on a discourse of creativity and participation as inherently subversive and anti-authoritarian, and thus leading to societal changes on a larger scale.

Today, community-based participatory projects are still celebrated for their democratic character, but at the same time, some are criticized for being politically naïve, concealing economic differences and inherent power relations under a combination of good intentions and personal promotion of the artist (Bishop, 2012, p. 16). In *One Place after Another* (2004), the American art historian Miwon Kwon criticizes "traditional" community-based art for essentializing the idea of community as existing and stable social entities. In contrast, she seeks to emphasize the qualities of what she defines as collective artistic praxis that is open-ended, process-oriented and performative:

Community-based art [...] is typically understood as a descriptive practice in which the community functions as a referential social entity. [...]. In contrast, collective artistic praxis, I would suggest, is a projective enterprise. It involves a provisional group, produced as a function of specific circumstances instigated by an artist and/or a cultural institution, aware of the effects of these circumstances on the very conditions of the interaction, performing its own coming together and coming apart as a necessarily incomplete modelling or working-out of a collective social process (p. 154).

Kwon's concept of collective artistic praxis seems appropriate for *The Hill*. Parfyme did not choose the Mimergade site because it housed a socially interesting community, or because they had a specific political agenda. The artists came to Mimergade to carry out an artistic experiment with social forms as their material. What they brought was a basic idea, including a timeframe and some materials, and they were open to collaboration as it occurred. *The Hill* thus challenges the idea of community as a preexisting "referential social identity" in so far as the project creates a provisional framework for the emergence of collectivity, open to everyone. It is a community characterized by its improvisational character, "performing its own coming together and coming apart."

Togetherness

As a theoretical reference, Kwon uses the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, in order "to figure out a way beyond and through the impossibility of community" (Kwon, 2004, p. 154). In the preface to his early book *The Inoperative Community* (1991), Nancy discusses essentialist understandings of the subject and compares them with another essentialism, that of community. In Nancy's view, the politically damaging understanding of subjectivity as absolute immanence has contributed to the loss of

the idea of community as a force that *cuts into* the subject and dissolves its presumed unity: "The relation (the community) is, if it *is*, nothing other than what undoes, in its very principle [...] the autarchy of absolute immanence" (p. 4). Following this understanding, Nancy's community, like Butler's performativity, becomes a way of understanding that undoes the essentialist idea of self as a necessary premise for our being in the world. Community can never be constructed or even performed as such, but it can be grasped performatively as an act of *un-working* singularity in the meeting with the plural. Community can be understood as a way to grasp what Nancy calls the *in* of being-*in*-common:

The community that becomes a single thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader...) necessarily loses the in of being-in-common. Or, it loses the with or the together that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being of togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being (p. xxxix, emphasis in original).

Nancy elaborates his ontology in *Being Singular Plural* (2000), where he tries to explain how singularity and plurality reciprocally un-work each other through reciprocal *exposure*. According to Nancy's understanding, singular is not a subject or an individual that exists in its own right: Being singular is only to be understood in relation to being plural, and singulars are by definition incommensurable with each other. As suggested by Christopher Watkin (2013), the plural of singular, plurality:

is nothing but the exposure (exposition) of singulars each to the other, an exposure that can never itself be substantialized and made into one further quality or capacity. It is not and cannot be a property or trait that any of the singulars possesses (p. 528).

Quoting my own analysis in the 2015 study, *The Hill*:

is an example of how processes of Nancy's being-in-common might be enabled, even if only at a hypothetical level. In *The Hill*, one could say that togetherness comes into presence because no particular collectivity or community is presumed in advance, and no particular "we" is constructed. Togetherness in *The Hill* can be seen as a form of exposure of the participants to the praxis of doing something, for example playing, drinking coffee, building, discussing, relaxing (Illeris, 2015, p. 78).

Following Nancy, it is thus possible to view *The Hill* as an occasion, not for establishing a particular form of community or collectivity but for un-working community through the fragile being-*in*-common of togetherness.

The pedagogical potential of community in Nancy's sense is about learning to live within the openness of being singular plural as a way of connecting to the social dimension of AESD. What we can learn from Nancy is that, like the subject, the social is not a fixed entity, but both should be understood as nomadic forms of being which are constantly in the making.

III. The site-specific art/environment lens

The third of Guattari's three ecologies is concerned with the environmental, which he sees as yet another existential territory in need of being opened up processually by forms of praxis that will make it habitable, and adds that "it is this praxic opening-out which constitutes the essence of 'eco'-art" (Guattari, 2008, p. 35). In this section, I look more closely at the relationship between *The Hill* and the register of the environmental, beginning from empirically grounded definitions of site in Miwon Kwon's vocabulary and then moving to more general questions of space, place and environment as these concepts have been elaborated by Tim Ingold and by Deleuze and Guattari.

Site-specific art

According to Kwon (2004), site-specific art was first conceptualized as art that depends on and is defined by an actual physical location from which the work cannot be moved without losing its meaning as an art work. Later, however, the idea of site was enlarged to include "not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic and political processes" (p. 3). In many contemporary art projects, writes Kwon, the idea of "site" becomes *discursive* in the sense that it relates to public realms across broader cultural, social and discursive fields. "It can be literal, like a street corner, or virtual, like a theoretical concept" (p. 3)⁸.

Kwon defines art that depends on a physical location as *phenomenological/experiential* writing that in these works:

the space of art was no longer perceived as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, but a real place. The art object or event in this context was to be singularly and multiply experienced in the here and now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration [...], rather than instantaneously perceived in a visual epiphany by a disembodied eye (p. 11).

By emphasizing the real place, she refers to phenomenological qualities, such as size, scale, texture, topographical features, seasonal characteristics of climate etc. (p. 3), while the characteristics of the discursive site might be that it often extends and is dispersed into broader cultural, social and discursive fields (p. 3). In reality, as also emphasized by Kwon, many contemporary art projects can be understood through both paradigms as they "operate in overlapping ways in past and current site-oriented art" (p. 4).

Looking at the site of *The Hill*, the most apparent feature is that it is an open area covered with grass surrounded by apartment buildings. Although in the middle of the city, the area seems to be adapted for no particular use and therefore quite suitable for a primitive construction site. Yet the site was not chosen only because of its particular phenomenological qualities; it was chosen for social and discursive reasons, inscribed as it was in the larger discourse of the curated project *SID NED!*, which, in its turn, was part of a new strategy adopted in 2004 by the City of Copenhagen in which permanent urban renewal projects were preceded by temporary projects of "mostly of an artistic character" (City of Copenhagen, 2010, p. 10).

Writing about their own motivation for participating in *SID NED!*, Parfyme (2006) emphasizes their choice of site as the result of a spontaneously driven process rather than of a careful selection:

We had been thinking about building an outdoor hillscape for a while. At first we were about to carry it out on one of Copenhagen's main squares, but due to bureaucratic delay of our plans we had a chance to reconsider. "Hey isn't it a little cheap just to add to what is already nice and neat?" "Boys, let's pick another place." And then, Christian Skovbjerg turned up with his "take a seat"-project and we joined forces and chose Mimersgade (para. 5).

Although *The Hill* was inscribed in an urban renewal discourse, the project also challenges this discourse. By insisting on "just building," Parfyme attempts to overcome, or at least question, the presupposed role ascribed to them by the city council to implicitly act as midwives for social

⁸ Kwon (2004, p. 3) proposes three different but overlapping paradigms of site specificity: phenomenological or experiential, social/institutional, and discursive. For this brief account, I chose to include only the phenomenological/experiential and the discursive paradigm.

improvement. Instead, the site becomes performative in the open sense: *The Hill* does not limit itself to just occupying a site; the project literally "takes place."

Environment

Under the rubric of the built environment, human industry has created an infrastructure of hard surfaces, fitted out with objects of all sorts, upon which the play of life is supposed to be enacted. [...] The blockage is only provisional, however. For wherever anything lives the infrastructure of the occupied world is breaking up or wearing away, ceaselessly eroded by the disorderly groping of inhabitants, both human and nonhuman, as they reincorporate and rearrange its crumbling fragments into their own ways of life (Ingold, 2008, pp. 1808-1809).

In the article quoted above, social anthropologist Tim Ingold defines environment as "a zone of entanglement" (p. 1797), declaring that his purpose is "to recover the sense of what it means to inhabit the world." Ingold argues against modernist understandings of environment as a surface or a stage and instead proposes to see our surroundings as a "vaguely defined zone of admixture and intermingling" (p. 1803). "Places," he writes, "do not so much exist as occur – they are topics rather than objects, stations along ways of life" (p. 1808).

Ingold's approach to the environment as a fluid space has many qualities in common with Guattari's approach in *The Three Ecologies* (2008) when he talks about "an environment in the process of being reinvented" (p. 45). It also connects further back to Guattari's concept of 'smooth space', which he developed together with Gilles Deleuze in the 14th text of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). In contrast to 'striated space', which is defined as a partitioned field constructed in order to organize open space into specific places or sites for defined (human) activities, 'smooth space' is defined as an environment, a landscape (vast or microscopic) in which a subject operates:

Smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties. It is haptic rather than optical perception. Whereas in striated forms organize a matter, in the smooth materials signal forces and serve as symptoms for them. It is an intensive rather than extensive space, one of distances, not of measures and properties. Intense Spatium instead of Extensio (p. 479, emphasis in original).

Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the two kinds of space not only are dependent on one another but also transform into one another: "Smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (p. 474). Although Deleuze and Guattari insist on their preference for smooth space as a "space of becoming," they also underline the function of striated space as a "space of progress" (p. 486).

I see *The Hill* as an effort to try to inhabit the built environment of Mimersgade through a process of rearrangement and intensification that can be connected to Ingold's idea of environment as a zone of entanglement and to what I interpret as Deleuze and Guattari's idea of environment as a constant process of transversion and reversion of the striated and smooth qualities of space: In contrast to the nomad place of smooth space, the project establishes a sedentary place typical of striated space, but the project does so in order to open up the physical place to new perceptions and experiences that are of a social but also of an environmental nature. Instead of just occupying a site by living upon it, Parfyme actively try to enact environment as "a zone of entanglement" where the narrow, surrounded space of the city square turns into a "space of becoming"—an intensive place related to optic and haptic perception. By inhabiting the place day by day, the artists and the participants establish contiguity not only with each

other and the building materials but also with the ground they are inhabiting. By working on the ground, the site becomes a place, and the place becomes an environment connected to the human bodies of the participants through touch, smell and texture.

However, what could be missed in order to turn *The Hill* into a truly environmental project is a closer conviviality with the area of Mimersgade as an ecosystem that includes whatever grows and lives there and whatever resources the land might provide, threatening the striated space of the city in its own erosive ways. If we look at urban art projects with a more pronounced environmental or even ecological profile, they typically include forms of gardening aiming at low-cost ecological food production and/or the restoration of natural cycles, where the former site or environment becomes an active partaker in the project—a participant or co-producer (e.g., projects by Futurefarmers, Superflex and Fritz Haeg in Brown, 2014). In such projects, forms of sustainable living are enacted not only socially (among humans) but also ecologically (among humans, non-humans, nature, things etc.).

In contrast, *The Hill* begins as a performance enacted by the artists, but day by day, the performance grows into a community project and finally, through the physical processes of entanglement with the physical environment, the community project relates to site-specificity. In a pragmatic although playful way, *The Hill* thus connects to all of Guattari's three registers: subjectivity, sociality and the environment.

Conclusion

The ecological person

In the beginning of this article, I mentioned how the Danish economist Ove. K. Pedersen (2014, s. 24) shows how the school system of the neoliberal competition state has deliberately substituted education of the *essential* person, connected to an ideal of the human being as coherent, harmonic and fulfilling personality, by the education of the *opportunistic* person, connected to a goal-oriented, individualistic and self-sufficient ideal of maximum performance. As a conclusion of my analysis of *The Hill*, I propose that participatory art projects have the potentiality for educating a third kind of person: the *ecological* person.

Following the three analyses that all point to anti-essentialistic qualities of *The Hill*, I see the ecological person not so much as an individual in the classical humanist sense but rather as a relational form of becoming a body entangled with other bodies and elements through occurrences, events, encounters and symbioses. As suggested by Butler and by Guattari, subjectivity is produced through ongoing relational processes of subjectivation, meaning that it is interdependent and always in the making, embodied and embedded. The ecological person is a manifestation of subjectivity within the social and environmental webs that constitute the world across species and other forms of being including what normally counts as 'environment'. Employing a much-used term of the moment, one could say that the ecological person is *post-human*: The person relies on an ethics which Rosi Braidotti (2013, p. 49-50) defines as "an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth'-others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism."

In *The Hill*, processes of subjectivation, exposure to togetherness and environmental entanglements are intertwined in ways that, at least potentially, allow forms of being to appear that are closer to the ecological person than what appears in most educational settings. In contrast to the fixed positionings of teachers, pupils, environment, art works established by Western culture and petrified by modern institutions such as schools and museums, *The Hill* allows open forms of being for participants of all kinds. On one hand, it thus can be seen as an inheritor of numerous participatory art practices that from

the beginning of the 20th century have fought to challenge modern institutions (Bishop, 2012), and on the other, it is felt as contemporary because it embodies the urgency that many of us feel in this moment of history for developing different, sustainable and awarding life forms. The ideal of the ecological person then might not be new, but the urgency increases as the polarization between sustainable ways of living and the opportunistic values of the competition state grows faster and faster.

Potentials of participatory art for AESD

Returning to the potentials of participatory art for Art Education for Sustainable Development, the connection between pedagogy and participatory art lies in experimentation with creating new, ephemeral communities that open up tenuous experiences of ecological forms of being. The pedagogical consequences of the enactment of small projects like *The Hill* can thus turn out to be more political than their ostensibly innocent character.

In relation to my initial definitions of the educational and ecological turns in contemporary art, it might be surprising that I have chosen an art project that does not illustrate these turns in an explicit manner. *The Hill* is not educational in the strict form of providing public lectures or the like, and it is not ecological in the sense that it promotes a certain view or experience of the intertwinings between humans and nature. Instead, *The Hill* demonstrates how the most important requirement for AESD is not to work with pedagogy and ecology as themes but to *embody* pedagogy and ecology as open-ended, explorative, pragmatic and playful modes of being and acting.

Through the inspiration from participatory art practices like *The Hill*, and through engagement with concepts like subjectivation, togetherness and environment, I hope that art education can be used as a symbolic place where teachers and students can experiment together with how to live our lives in more sustainable and collective ways entangling and intertwining environmental, social and mental ecologies of being.

Author presentation

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